

To: The F.C.C. "Localism" project staff  
Feb. 22, 2004

Dear Sirs and Ladies,

A quick introduction; my name is Phil York. I'm a 38 year veteran record producer / recording-engineer in the music recording business, nearly all of it in Texas.

I've recorded a #1 Billboard hit single in 5 different music styles. I've recorded over 30 Grammy candidates and three winners, in three different categories, my most recent Grammy win being in 2003. I've recorded the musical numbers to a Universal Pictures feature film which was nominated for 4 Oscars and won two. I own and operate Yorktown Digital Works, Inc., a CD mastering lab and 24 track studio in Irving, Texas. I'm busy and active in this industry. I've seen it grow and I've grown with it.

I mention all this to say I'm not new on the scene. I've been around the block a time or two. I have some valuable information to impart to you.

You're investigating the broadcast policies of radio and TV stations. I can tell you in brief terms what their motivation is.

Only a few years ago I was recording a Christmas project for a high-profile radio DJ who is also a stockholder of one of the largest broadcast corporations in the USA, and who is on the board of directors as well. The appropriate time was at hand so I asked him why none of the radio stations in their chain ever played any of the better regional artists' music. His answer was, and I quote:

"Phil, we are not in the business of breaking new recordings and acts. We are in the business for one reason, to sell advertising. We don't care how we hold the listener, we just want the ratings so we can charge more for the commercials we run."

His statement says many things, but among them:

1. They don't care about community interests, just selling advertising and raking in dollars.
2. They automatically consider that nothing recorded locally would be good enough to hold their listeners.
3. Everything recorded locally would be inferior, no matter what.

These points are enough, but there are more if one wants to look further.

If the FCC is looking for a solution to "localism", you probably need to look north for the answer, to the country of Canada.

Sometime in the late 1980's or early 1990's, I think, that country passed a law which required every radio station to play a percentage of locally produced programming; music, arts, etc. I believe it was 10% or 15%, but I'm not certain. These stations had been playing only the American hits and ignoring their own regional Canadian artists and communities.

Their new law leveled the playing field! All of a sudden the radio stations' attitudes changed markedly. Instead of telling the local artists to "Stay away!", their attitude became, "OK, well come on in and let's hear what you've got."

Strong pockets of creativity blossomed and regional stars were created. The cream did rise to the top. Some of those artists got signed by the big record labels. It amounted to each radio station offering a ladder to the best of their local talent. Their surrounding communities were proud.

If implemented properly, the FCC could implement such a rule. Then the radio stations playing music would have to look into their own community for part of their programming. But the field would be leveled, since all stations would have to do it!

Even in the most remote areas of the US, there are pockets of artistry and creativity. No area would suffer by having to program locally produced music or programming.

As it is right now, 98% (an educated guess) of the music played on all radio stations in the USA is recorded in one of four cities: Los Angeles, New York, Nashville (in the case of country music) or Miami (in the case of Hispanic music). Is that "localism"? No. Other words for it are "corporate monopoly".

One final thought; most radio stations lately are suffering from what they believe is an "economic downturn". I disagree. They are suffering from trying to use old solutions to solve new problems. A new generation of listeners now has far more options than just listening to the local radio stations. There is the internet, internet radio, and don't ignore a great new way to hear music, satellite radio, meaning XM and it's competitor, Sirius. They reach all over North America simultaneously and offer programming with NO COMMERCIALS on the music channels! I have XM and it's awesome, well worth the \$10 per month to have the wide choices with no commercials!

Local radio stations really have painted themselves into a corner. IF YOU IMPLEMENT SOME SORT OF REGIONAL-INVOLVEMENT PLAN AS A RESULT OF YOUR "LOCALISM" INVESTIGATIONS, YOU MAY WELL SAVE LOCAL RADIO FROM IT'S OWN FOLLY!

I invite you to consider these thoughts and ideas seriously. If you think I might be able to be of assistance, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely yours,

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